

The week ending November 8, 2013

## IRAN

### **U.S. will ease sanctions if Iran halts nuclear program**

On the eve of a new round of talks between world powers and Iran, a senior Obama administration official said Wednesday that the United States was prepared to offer Iran limited relief from economic sanctions if Tehran agreed to halt its nuclear program temporarily and reverse part of it. The official said that the suspension of Iran's nuclear efforts, perhaps for six months, would give negotiators time to pursue a comprehensive and far more challenging agreement. "Put simply, what we're looking for now is a first phase, a first step, an initial understanding that stops Iran's nuclear program from moving forward for the first time in decades and that potentially rolls part of it back," the official told reporters. But administration officials are concerned that the window for negotiations may close if some way is not found to freeze Iran's nuclear program. Experts say Iran's nuclear program has already advanced to the point that it has the technological capability to make a bomb. As the P5+1 arrive in Geneva to continue talks with Iran, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [urged](#) the nations not to give Iran any sanctions relief ahead of a dismantlement of Iran's nuclear weapons capabilities. Israel will "strongly oppose" a proposal that world powers are "examining" regarding Iran's nuclear program, which Jerusalem views as a "bad deal," senior Israeli officials said. This information is an update to the information contained in this week's [Sermon Tidbits](#). To subscribe to Sermon Tidbits, click [here](#).

## THE U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

### **U.S. to join largest aerial drill in Israel's history**

[Haaretz](#) reported that Israel will hold its largest international aerial exercises in history at the end of the month and will be joined by American, Italian and Greek aircraft for wide-scope trainings. Comprehensive air drills, named "Blue Flag," will be conducted from the Ovda air base in southern Israel and will include over 100 combat planes. The Israel Air Force is making widespread preparations for the event; this week, training for the exercise will begin, which is set to include four days of flight drills that will focus on aerial combat and communicating in English. "The 'Blue Flag' drills are very high level exercises, and we need to conduct them in English, which is something we aren't used to," the Israel Air Force website quoted one officer in charge of the pre-drill training for the "Knights of the Orange Tail" Squadron based at Hazerim. An official with knowledge of the upcoming exercise said that it will be of a scope never before seen in Israel, due to its unique character, and the amount of participants taking part. According to him, the Israel Air Force hopes to turn the drill into a tradition that other nations will seek to take part in in the future.

## ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS

### **Kerry meets Netanyahu in Jerusalem**

Secretary of State John Kerry met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday for a meeting that lasted over three hours. Kerry has embarked on his latest mission to the Middle East in an effort to engage with allied countries in the region and maintain the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. Netanyahu [expressed](#) hopes that Kerry's visit will "help steer [Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas] back to a place where we could achieve the historic peace we seek." "We have six months ahead of us on the timetable we have set for ourselves and I am confident we have the ability to make progress," Kerry said. This information is an update to the information contained in this week's [Sermon Tidbits](#). To subscribe to Sermon Tidbits, click [here](#).

## THE GREATER MIDDLE EAST

### **U.S. intelligence suggests Syria may hide chemical weapons**

The United States is looking at new [classified intelligence](#) indicating the Syrian government may not fully declare its chemical weapons stockpile. This could mean it will still have a secret cache of chemical weapons even after the current agreed-upon destruction effort is carried out. The intelligence is not definitive but "there are various threads of information that would shake our confidence," one U.S. official said. "They have done things recently that suggest Syria is not ready to get rid of all their chemical weapons." Several U.S. officials declined to be identified because of the sensitivity of the data. U.S. intelligence agencies, the Defense Department, the State Department and White House are all reviewing the information.

## ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

### **A year after Hurricane Sandy: looking back at Israeli relief**

Hurricane Sandy caused \$72 billion of damage in New York and New Jersey when it made landfall [one year ago](#). IsraAID, the Israeli global relief organization, was on the ground a few days later assisting with the recovery effort. IsraAID was created in 2001 with the goal of utilizing Israeli expertise in relief efforts to assist other nations after disasters. IsraAID has responded to crises in 22 countries and distributed more than 1,000 tons of relief and medical supplies. In response to Hurricane Sandy, IsraAID worked in the Breezy Point and Far Rockaway areas of New York City and stayed for nearly three months. During that time, the Israeli aid agency coordinated and facilitated the work of more than 330 volunteers and rehabilitated 61 houses. "The assistance was gutting houses and helping people clean out and pick up their belongings," said Shachar Zahavi, founding director of IsraAID. The positive experiences of the volunteers, combined with the welcome they received upon entering the United States, influenced Zahavi's commitment to helping the U.S. in a time of need. Over the past six months, IsraAID has responded to other American crises by assisting tornado victims in Oklahoma and those recovering from severe flooding in Colorado. And yet, this dedication to providing aid to the United States is just one of many relief projects being conducted across the world.